



U.S. Department of Justice

United States Attorney
Northern District of Texas

1100 Commerce St., 3rd Fl.
Dallas, Texas 75242-1699

Telephone (214)659-8600
Fax (214)767-2898

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
CONTACT: 214/659-8707
www.usdoj.gov/usao/txn

DALLAS, TEXAS
MAY 20, 2004

**FORMER AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER/PILOT
SENTENCED TO 33 MONTHS
FOLLOWING WORKERS' COMPENSATION FRAUD CONVICTION**

Grapevine Man Fraudulently Collected More Than \$354,000 from Workers' Comp

United States Attorney Jane J. Boyle announced that Michael Lee Harms, a former air traffic controller and pilot, was sentenced today by the Honorable Barefoot Sanders, United States Senior District Judge, to 33 months imprisonment and ordered to pay \$354,389.61 in restitution. Harms, age 50, of Grapevine, Texas, was convicted in February following a four-day trial in federal court in Dallas, on all counts of a six-count indictment that charged him with various offenses related to defrauding the Office of Workers' Compensation Program (OWCP). Specifically, Harms was convicted on three counts of mail fraud and three counts of fraud to obtain federal employees' compensation. Judge Sanders ordered that Harms surrender to the Bureau of Prisons on July 8, 2004.

Federal regulations require individuals receiving workers' compensation benefits to periodically submit to the Department of Labor a statement disclosing their employment and earnings. Evidence presented at trial showed that Harms filed an OWCP claim in November 1996 when he fell out of a chair and injured his back while working as an air traffic controller. He fraudulently collected more than \$354,359.62 in OWCP funds because he worked as a pilot for air freight companies, collected wages for that employment, and continued to advise OWCP that he was not employed. Harms also served as president and CEO of Amber Aviation, Inc. and was on the board of directors of Challenge Air for Kids and Friends, Inc., a nonprofit organization. The government showed at trial that Harms covered up and concealed from OWCP his employment and income and continued to receive workers' compensation payments for which he was not entitled.

U.S. Attorney Boyle praised the investigative efforts of the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General and the U.S. Department of Transportation, Office of Inspector General. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Lynn Hastings and Dayle Elieson.